What if Scotland's trad scene were more equitable, more diverse?

Firstly, we need to admit together that equality issues do exist within our scene. It's no longer acceptable for us to do nothing, or feel that this is not our responsibility. Silence is assent.

Secondly, we need to feel comfortable to talk about issues that don't directly affect us. It is incredibly important to centralise the people who have lived experience and learn directly from them, but we can also use our privilege and influence help other voices be heard.

Here are some instigating questions / scenarios from my hypothetical utopia. They could start with 'what if' or they could just be statements of fact if we actually achieved them.

What if…

- **What if we all understood and admitted together that there's an issue with lack of support <u>for</u> and representation <u>of</u> people with disabilities and additional needs in our scene?**

Without the what if's:

- Disabled access is no longer something you need to request
  - Wheelchair access is available at the front door of all venues.
  - There is a trip-advisor-esque wiki resource rating all venues on their accessibility and additional support resources and procedures. This wiki is followed closely by the industry.

- Hearing loops are installed in all of our venues and public buildings

- Concerts and events are multi-platform, running live and streamed online.

  - Not to replace the need for improved access, but to supplement and <u>further</u> access.

  - This gives better access to those who may have additional needs, and may perhaps also help those from different socio-economic backgrounds, geographical locations and other areas of disadvantage. Tickets can also easily be subsidised.

- Training was developed to teach people working in the scene to understand what additional needs might be, for example the extra needs of neurodiverse person, and those with visible and invisible disabilities.
  - People could be workshop attendees, students, audience members, workshop leaders, performers, organisers, agents – the whole range of people in our scene.

- Discussions were opened up with people who have additional needs to learn from them directly about what their experiences have been, and where they feel the barriers are in accessing traditional music.

- There's a team of specialists employed in the trad scene who can collaborate with artists to create performance work that is multi-sensory. They work directly with artists, and are also resident at venues.

- As a result of this, artists have now developed a toolkit of skills and ideas to help make their shows more widely accessible to a diverse group of people. It's also raised awareness and understanding within our audiences and the wider community.

- **What if we all understood and admitted together that there's an issue with lack of support <u>for</u> and representation <u>of</u> people who are LGBTQ+, non-binary, trans and women in our scene?**

- Society understands and respects the complexity and fluidity of gender and sexuality.

- Forms no longer ask for the title 'Mr, Mrs, Miss, Other, Prefer not to say'.

- People no longer feel underrepresented in the scene in terms of gender and sexuality.

- Everyone is given equal merit for their achievements regardless of gender or sexuality.

- At the same time, there are specific events and festivals that take place to celebrate the diversity we have within our scene. The Bogha Frois anniversary concert opened Celtic Connections this year.

- We no longer have to delete male bands from posters.

- We achieved a 50/50 male / non-male representation at events, and a new generation of non-male artists grew up watching a diverse range of role models on stage.

- Our scene supports parents. People involved in performing and touring are given advice, support and funding to continue their jobs while raising a family. Tours have evolved so they suit a range of different people and needs. People no longer have to choose 'career or family'.

- Family friendly events give parents and children the opportunity to enjoy traditional music together.

- There is robust and well publicised safeguarding education and training for people in all areas of the scene, including organisations, institutions, agents, funding bodies, young people and freelancers, and this training is regularly updated.

- A Trad Music HR Department was launched, providing support, guidance and nurturing a level of accountability for the wide range of freelancers working in the scene.

- We have a code of ethics and a code of conduct to guide people on how to act responsibly and respectfully to each other. Everyone understands and respects the codes, they understand the law and they understand it's all of our responsibility to ensure the scene is safe and welcoming.

- We began with one designated safe area in every public space, but now every public space is designated a safe area. Safeguarding officers or trained guardians are available at every event.

- Every working team and organisation has an Equality, Inclusion & Diversity representative who has direct access to specialist advice and support.

- Training was developed to teach people working in the scene to understand what abuse unacceptable behaviour is, and discussions were opened up to talk about the issue of abuse, enable people to disclose information, learn from the past and from each other, and enable everyone to begin the healing process and move forward together.

- Research was conducted into the dangers of the digital world, and as a result training was rolled out in how to conduct yourself online as a professional in the trad scene, and safeguarding procedures have been developed suitable for a range of workers and volunteers.

- Unacceptable behaviour, such as being sexist towards women, used to be dismissed as 'och that's just the way that person is'. It has now become taboo. People are happy to call up their pals when they say or do something inappropriate.

What if we all understood and admitted together that there's an issue with lack of involvement and representation of people from minority ethnic communities in our scene?

- We have a clear understanding of the different ethnic communities in our country, and we have formed a strong bond with them. Projects were developed so people could learn about minority ethnic communities.
  - People got to meet each other and learn direct from the communities themselves. We learned about their cultures and traditions, and their own traditional music.
- We had opportunities to make music together too. There are now many great examples of Scottish artists who have released work that's in collaboration with ethnically diverse musicians.
- We used traditional music, song and storytelling to educate people on Scotland's history, particularly the parts of history we are less comfortable with as a nation.
- We worked hard to ensure our scene wasn't just open and welcoming to everyone, but actively sought to draw people into our community. We undertook outreach work to nurture a more diverse audience for traditional music activity.
- We created opportunities for everyone in Scotland to access traditional music at all ages. From nurseries to care homes and everywhere in between. We provide subsidised tickets for those on low incomes, and we arrange events in areas of multiple deprivation. We visited workplaces. We worked to strengthen communities through cultural connection.
- We created more education opportunities for a wide range of young people, encouraging more diversity in our young professionals. We learned about the barriers that stop them getting involved in traditional music and helped people navigate around them.
- We created opportunities for a broad range of trad artists and professionals, focusing on those who aren't considered 'trad mainstream' to help nurture more varied festival programmes and events, still nurturing a thriving industry but focusing on the wide range of performers we have in the scene.

- What if we normalise the discussion about uncomfortable topics?
- What if everyone feels welcome, safe, supported and respected in our scene?
- What if unconscious bias is a thing of the past?
- **What if we had the funding, the team and the energy to achieve all of this and more?**

- Does the scene need to stop and focus more on community rather than commercialism?
- We need more peer support.
- There are low expectations of what some people may be able to achieve due to their minority characteristics.
- There's a fear about dealing with the unknown. We don't necessarily have enough experience working with people who have additional needs, so rather than being excited about a new challenge, we are often daunted.
- Finding people within community groups who can be EID specialists or help people with access issues / mentoring. For some individuals, they want to help but just don't know how to.
- How do we ensure projects are fully inclusive? Do we need ringfenced funding for widening access?
- We could better connect the dots between organisations that display good practice, to share understanding and celebrate when great work is happening.
- We can learn more about people with additional needs through some level of experience. One suggestion was that people who run venues should spend a day in a wheelchair. There could be awareness training to help people understand how other people experience situations.
- Considering ways that people can participate in music, we discussed that carers also need support, as they might want to participate but often find it difficult to leave home.
- Specialist teams for focused discussion – entire meetings for smaller subject areas such as parenting, physical mobility…. There are many big subjects needing further

discussion, and we can learn directly from people who the issues affect / who experience exclusion of any form.

- Learning how to ask people about questions / subjects you might feel awkward about, and asking questions sensitively.

- Learning what people's responsibilities are. What do each of us deserve, and what should we be expected to do for others? There could be some difficult questions and truths to discuss.

- How do we reach out to the community and draw people in without forcing people?

- What are the additional needs people have in our scene? Who are the minority representatives in our scene, and what minorities are not being represented?

- The pressure of needing to be a specialist, for example a nursery teacher teaching music to children. People need the confidence to use traditional music in their lives, but also know that they can call on specialists too.

- If we are powered by profit, we will only make changes that benefit us financially. If we are powered by community, we can make changes that may not make money but promote equality, inclusion.

- If we had a guaranteed job scheme, there could be a lot of work done in the area of EID.

- Being aware of virtue signalling, using our public platforms to spread constructive messages but also spending time behind the scenes educating ourselves and having productive discussions out of the public eye.

- The importance of using our privilege to open the door for other people to speak, then listening to what they have to say. 'Whitesplaining'; when sharing social media posts, some people feel the need to translate other people's perfectly composed comments, and this could diminish the voice of the original person.

- Does social media make it difficult to engage in discussion about these kind of subjects? It's a good way of drawing people in, but it isn't the place to be discussing challenging subjects. That should be done in person / on a platform like zoom.

- Keychange – which Trad groups are a member of Keychange, and should we be asking organisations to join up? What is involved in being a member of Keychange? Is it potentially a lot of work for a voluntary organisation, or is it a straightforward process?

- Consider how comfortable you are with talking about challenging subjects. Start with talking about issues with your friends and family, then take a step outside of that circle, and talk with those people, then take another step. You gain confidence, you practice being able to talk about issues and you slowly move further towards talking with confidence on public platforms.

- Get out of your bubble!!

- Should trad tutors be given extra training on working with people who have additional support needs, and should we have some kind of learning disclosure where tutors are made aware of any support needs a student might have? Often in adult learner classes, if a student is autistic for example, we wouldn't be notified, but in a university environment a specific learning contract and agreement would be drawn up to ensure the student is being fully supported. Some students also don't want to disclose any additional needs.

- It shouldn't be ok for us to say 'we just have to make do with it'. If we're making do with something, that thing should be better supported / funded (I know this might not be achievable in reality).

- We need to be prepared to go out – to draw people in. Sometimes you can't expect people to be happy / be able to come into your environment, you need to go out to and meet people where they feel comfortable.

- Understanding the different access points to traditional music; family history, school lessons, friends take you to a gig, hearing music on the radio / tv… Do we focus too much on where people were born and brought up? Can people from different geographical areas sing Gaelic songs, bothy ballads…?

- Awareness of cultural appropriation.

- With cultural confidence we feel more equipped to make connections with people.

- We are lucky to have culture and tradition that is more easy to be proud of; some trad musicians in other countries have issues with their traditional music being tied to contentious issues / certain political views.

- Sometimes public gigs aren't the right scenario to ask people about access issues – we need proper forums

- We would like people who represent minority characteristics to advise us and to act as advocates, but we also need to remember that those advocates might not want to be defined by their advocacy.
- Not defining people by certain characteristics – allowing them to be advocates but not defining them by their advocacy. We do other things.
- We could be better at intergenerational work.